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The case against Bush: Wrong moment for a politician

By Thomas J. McIntyre

I will vote against confirmation of George H. Bush as director of the Central Intelligence Agency because the appointment of so clearly perceived a political figure to direct the rebuilding of an agency weakened and discredited by political subordination would undercut two self-evident priorities.

Sen. McIntyre, a New Hampshire Democrat, is a member of the intelligence subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Those priorities are:

- The need to restore the fact of CIA probity by insuring the agency's future adherence to its statutory purpose and by insulating the CIA from political corruption of that purpose.
- The need to persuade the American people that the restoration effort is sincere and that the end result can be trusted.

The latter imperative takes on a particular urgency in the face of massive evidence of public disenchantment with political misadventures and bitterness over repeated betrayal of trust. And in my judgment, history and circumstance dictate that the burden of meeting that imperative rests equally upon the White House and the Congress.

It was, after all, we in the Congress who invited not only abuses by the CIA, but abuses of the CIA, by defaulting in our oversight responsibilities. It was our apathy and dereliction of duty that let the agency slip its statutory bonds to flaunt the law, the Bill of Rights, and the very value system of our free and open society. But it was also we in the Congress who left the agency so vulnerable to subordination by self-serving political leaders in the executive branch. And these are the unhappy facts at the heart of the issue.

Public trust and confidence in the CIA is

at its lowest level in the history of that institution. And it is clearly evident that this collapse of confidence was brought on not only by exposure of agency misdeeds, but by the painful realization that some of those misdeeds were encouraged by political leaders who sought not an intelligence advantage over a foreign adversary, but a political advantage over domestic critics and the opposition party.

Now I'm certain the public has no inclination to excuse the CIA's consent to being compromised. But I am equally certain the public rightly holds the corrupters more accountable than those who were corrupted.

And if I am right that it was the politicizing of the CIA that cost it most in trust and credibility, then the nomination of George H. Bush — the first political person ever advanced for the office of CIA director — is an appallingly insensitive affront to the American people, and in a very real sense a disservice to Mr. Bush, an able and personable gentleman who surely did not fashion the circumstances that make his nomination for this post at this time so injudicious and inappropriate.

The people understand that information is power. A good many of them understand that the Central Intelligence Agency is a pre-eminent repository of information. They understand that by this fact it can also be the pre-eminent dispensary of power. And they rightly deserve every possible assurance that the information gathered by the CIA will never again be compromised or exploited to enhance the political power of those who have access to and authority over the agency and its officers.

I am not a cynic. But I hope I am a realist.

Feeling as I do, it matters not that Mr. Bush would forego partisan politics during his tenure. It matters not that President Ford has removed him from the list of vice presidential possibilities. Indeed, it mat-

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